

# V STORIES OF IKRAM - BETAL





# **VIKRAM - BETAAL STORIES**

NAVASUMA

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**VASAN PUBLICATIONS**

BANGALORE-560 053

## **1. MADHU MALATHI**

Once a brahmin called Keshav lived in a town on the banks of Yamuna river. He was a scholar. He had an extremely beautiful daughter. Her name was Madhumalathi.

When Madhumalathi attained the age of marriage, Keshav wanted an ideal husband for her. So he started searching for a handsome, intelligent and well-mannered boy befitting his daughter's immense beauty.

A few weeks later, three boys hailing from a place called Kanya Kubj visited the brahmin's house. All of them were handsome and intelligent. Moreover, they were friends. Each one of them had seen the girl at a fair and were enchanted

with her beauty. And each one of these boys felt that they would willingly give up their lives for the sake of Madhumalathi. They approached Keshav, the father and requested for the hand of Madhumalathi in marriage. Keshav was in a dilemma. Neither he nor his wife could decide upon any of these three youngmen. They therefore left this decision to their daughter.

On an auspicious day, Keshav invited the three suitors to his house so that Madhumalathi could choose her husband. But since all the three youngmen were equally good-looking and intelligent, the girl also found it difficult to decide whom to wed.

When Madhumalathi was sitting in her room thinking about her decision, a snake suddenly entered

the room and bit her. Unfortunately, she died. Her young suitors were extremely grieved.

These three youngmen had loved Madhumalathi very deeply and so, they decided to spend the rest of their lives in her memory.

After Madhumalathi's cremation was over, one of the youngmen collected her ashes, immersed them in the river Ganges and started living closeby.

The second one built a hut at the place where the cremation took place, and spread the ashes, using it as a bed.

The third one roamed from one holy place to another, all the time remembering Madhumalathi's beauty and grace. During such travel, he happened to stay overnight with a Tantrik. The

Tantrik's wife was very short-tempered. That night, while she was serving food to the guest, her baby started crying. In a fit of rage, she threw the baby into the fire. The baby's body turned into ashes.

Disgusted with what he saw, the youngman did not want to stay in the house even a minute longer. But the Tantrik, the father of the child, pacified his guest and taking a pinch of mud, uttered a prayer and sprinkled it on the ashes. His son came alive. The Tantrik left the prayer book on a table, asked his wife to feed the guest and went to sleep.

The youngman who was watching this with astonishment wanted to bring back Madhumalathi to life. So, when the Tantrik and his family were asleep, he stole the prayer

book and hurried back to his beloved's resting place.

By that time the youngman who had been living on the banks of Ganga river, also returned to the spot. The three young men thus met each other and were very happy at the thought of seeing Madhumalathi alive.

The youngman who had the prayer book in his possession, recited the prayer. The youngman who had been living on the banks of the Ganga sprinkled some holy water on the ashes. The magic worked and Madhumalathi stood up from the ashes, more beautiful than ever.

The three suitors were very thrilled. But then, they started fighting with each other, claiming her as his own. One suitor claimed, "I chanted the prayer. That's why she



got back her life." Another one said, "I sprinkled the holy water on her and gave her a new life. She belongs to me". The third one declared "After all, I preserved her ashes all these years. Otherwise how could she be made alive? Madhumalathi is my wife".

Betal ended his story here and asked Vikram "O! Meritorious King, you have heard the story. Now tell me how you would resolve this. Who is the right suitor for the girl? If you know the answer and still do not reply to me, your head will burst into pieces".

Vikram very calmly answered, "The young man who gave her life by reciting the prayer will be like a father to her. And the suitor who immersed her ashes in the river behaved like a son towards a mother. That's a very sacred

relationship. The youngman who led the life of an ascetic, renouncing everything and sleeping on a bed of ashes is the right suitor for her.”

“You are absolutely correct” praised Betal, “But since you have broken the rule not to utter a word, I am going back”. Saying this, Betal sprang out of Vikram’s grasp and returned to the tamarind tree.

## **2. NOBLE PERSON**

Had’nt Vikram promised the sage that he would bring Betal’s body? So, he again reached the tamarind tree and bringing the ghost down, he carried it across the shoulders and began his journey. He walked silently so that Betal would not escape again. But Betal started narrating yet another story.

Visakhadatta was the king of a big

city. A rich trader called Chandragupta lived in the same city. The king had issued an order that no man could have more than one wife. Nobody could marry some other person's wife. Anybody found guilty was to be punished.

Chandragupta was a bachelor. But once he met an extremely beautiful girl in a fair. He fell in love with her and decided to marry her.

On reaching home, Chandragupta asked his servants to find out where she lived and what was her name.

The servants returned a few days later with information about the girl. Her name was Manimanjari. She was the daughter of another rich merchant Madhavchandra of the same city.

Chandragupta sent one of his close friends to Madhavchandra's

house with the marriage proposal. But by that time Madhavchandra had already fixed up his daughter's marriage to a boy called Jayachandra. When he heard of this, Chandragupta was very upset. Having loved Manimanjari very deeply, he decided not even to think of marriage to any other girl. When Manimanjari heard of Chandragupta's love for her, she wrote him a letter. "I am helpless" she explained in the letter, "I have to abide by my father's decision. But I will come and see you after my marriage is over". Chandragupta felt somewhat happy on seeing the letter.

Manimanjari's marriage with Jayachandra was a grand affair. She was a very honest girl. So, without hiding anything, she told Jayachandra about Chandragupta. Pleased with her honesty, her

husband allowed her to visit Chandragupta. Unescorted, she left for his house. On the way, a thief, who wanted to rob her of all her jewellery stopped her. Manimanjari pleaded with him, "Please let me go now. I promise you that I will hand over the jewellery on my way back". The thief believed her and allowed her to proceed.

It was dark when Manimanjari reached Chandragupta's house. He was shocked and angry at seeing her. He scolded her, "How can a girl and that too, a married girl come to me at such a late hour? Moreover, don't you know about the king's order? It is an offence on our part to meet like this. If he sees us now, he will impose death penalty on us."

Stunned by Chandragupta's attitude, Manimanjari at once left the place. The thief was waiting for

her on the way. He was happy to see her again. But at the same time he was curious to know why she was walking the streets of the city at night.

Manimanjari told the thief all about herself. The thief took pity on her and told her, "You are very honest. I will not steal anything from you. Instead, I will escort you to your house".

Manimanjari reached home and told her husband about what transpired between herself and Chandragupta. But Jayachandra did not believe her. He threw her out of the house. Feeling distressed and helpless, she committed suicide.

Betal ended his narration here and asked Vikram "Vikram, you have heard the story with rapt attention. Now, decide and tell me

immediately who is the most noble of these four persons. Was it Manimanjari who ended her life? Or was it her husband who had agreed to send her to Chandragupta? Or the thief, who, without robbing her, sent her away? Or was it Chandragupta? If you know the answer and still prefer to remain silent, your head will split into pieces. Beware!”.

Vikram replied calmly “Betaal! A sacrifice made without selfish motives is the greatest sacrifice. Judge this yourself. Chandragupta did not accept Manimanjari fearing the king’s punishment. And her husband doubted her and did not want her back. Manimanjari was truthful. This created an unbearable situation for her. She committed suicide. All these had selfish motives”.

Vikram continued to explain, “It was the thief who was the most noble of these four persons. He could have easily robbed her. But he let her go without any selfishness on his part”.

“Vikram” said Betal in an appreciative tone, “I like your judgement. But you have talked. So I am going back to the tree”. Saying so, Betal flew back to the tamarind tree.

Since Vikram was determined to hand over Betal to the sage, he dashed towards the tree.

### **3. THE TWO BROTHERS**

Vikram went back to the tree and putting the corpse across the shoulders started walking. Betal asked him “Vikram! Yours is a futile exercise. Why don’t you go back to



your palace and lead a comfortable life?”. Vikram did not reply to Betal. He tried to walk faster. But Betal just would’nt leave him alone. To entertain Vikram, Betal had a story to tell. Vikram continued his journey while silently listening to the story.

Long time ago two brothers lived in a city. They loved each other very much. Jai was the elder of the two. Vijay was the younger one.

One morning they went for a stroll in a beautiful park. The garden was full of flowers and trees. While the brothers were admiring the garden, they saw a girl under a jacaranda tree. She was so beautiful that the brothers thought she was a goddess come down to earth. They followed her and found out where she lived. Her house was very near the garden.

Jai and Vijay walked up and down in front of the girl's house wanting to know more about her. A short while later, they spotted an old lady coming out of the house. Jai mustered enough courage to ask her "Madam, to whom does this house belong to?". The old lady told him that the house belonged to the beautiful girl and that he could meet her in the garden the next morning.

Crestfallen, the brothers returned home and planned to go the garden early in the morning. But Jai woke up earlier than his brother and went alone to the garden.

The beautiful girl was already there enjoying nature. Jai talked to her and asked her name. "My name is Chaya" she said. Jai told her that he wanted to marry her. When she asked him the reason for this. "Your

beauty is the reason” replied Jai, “I have never seen a more beautiful girl than you” adding in praise.

Chaya laughed and said “It is your imagination. I am not a beautiful girl. I have applied some cosmetics. Wait till I wash these away. Then you can see my true self”. She actually washed her face and lo! Jai could not make out any beauty in her. Disappointed, he returned home.

The next day, Vijay met Chaya in the garden. He also conveyed his desire to marry her. Chaya removed all traces of the cosmetics worn by her and appeared before Vijay with her natural looks.

Vijay had not fallen in love with the girl only for her beauty. He told her that he considered the goodness within her more appealing than her outworldly beauty. Chaya was

delighted at this answer and agreed to marry him.

Vijay returned home and told his brother about meeting Chaya and also about their decision to get married. Jai was surprised but controlled his feelings.

On an auspicious day, Vijay and Chaya were married. After marriage, Chaya looked more beautiful than ever. Vijay wanted to know the reason for this.

Chaya replied, "I have always been praised for my beauty." Vijay at once asked her, "Then why did you pretend to be ugly?"

Chaya teasingly told him, "I have always wanted to marry a man who loved me for my goodness of heart rather than my beauty. You proved to be the ideal husband. That's why I decided to marry you".

Vijay felt happy. Both Vijay and Chaya loved each other deeply and led a happy life.

But Jai had not forgiven Vijay for marrying a girl he himself had loved. He therefore wanted to kill Vijay. Vijay realised his brother's evil intentions and without any delay, drew out this sword and killed Jai.

The entire city was shocked to hear of Jai's murder. None could imagine that the brothers who were so close to each other would turn enemies.

Vijay was imprisoned for the crime he committed. There was a trial. During the trial, Vijay spoke of the truth. The judge gave his judgement.

Ending the story at this stage, Betal asked Vikram "Vikram! you

have heard the story. Now tell me what will be the judgement? Will the judge punish Vijay or will he free him? I know that you can answer this. If you keep quiet, your head will burst into pieces”.

Vikram thought for a moment. He then replied, “Betaal! The judge has to free Vijay. The judge knows what is right and what is wrong. Physical beauty can never be eternal. The beauty of the mind, knowledge and noble qualities are to be cherished for ever. Vijay had to murder his brother to protect himself. So, he deserves justice”.

Since Vikram spoke, Betaal jumped from his shoulders and hung itself upside down from the tamarind tree.

## 4. THE CORRECT CHOICE

King Vikram again reached the tree. Having decided not to say anything at all, he pulled down the ghost and carrying it, started his journey.

Betal addressed Vikram “O! Mighty King! Why do you want to hand me over to the wicked sage? I pity you. The path is strewn with sharp stones and thorny plants. Moreover you have to carry my heavy weight too. If you still insist on carrying me, let me tell you a story to enliven you”.

Betal started the story.

Ujjain was a beautiful city. It had given shelter to many scholars and traders. Punyasena was the king. Harichander was his minister. He had a daughter called Prabha and a son by name Devasen. The minister

wanted his daughter to be married to an ideal boy. Prabha had indicated to her parents and her brother that her husband should either be a braveman or a scholar or a scientist. They all vowed to find the right match for her.

A few weeks later, Harichander had to go to the neighbouring kingdom on some work. He met a brahmin boy there. The boy was a scientist. Harichander asked him, "Can you really prove your scientific talent to me?"

The boy constructed a flying chariot and made Harichander travel with him, high up in the clouds. In no time at all, they had reached Ujjain.

Harichander was delighted to find the ideal husband for his daughter. He therefore proposed his daughter in marriage to the brahmin boy. The



boy agreed. Harichander promised to perform the marriage on the following seventh day.

In the meantime, Harichander's son Devasen met another brahmin boy in Ujjain itself. This boy expressed his wish to marry Prabha and Devasen, bearing in mind his sister's conditions, asked the boy what his qualifications were. The brahmin boy claimed that he was a courageous person skilled in warfare. To prove himself, he demonstrated some astonishing feats with swords and spears. Happy that he had found the right match for his sister, Devasen agreed to give his sister in marriage to the boy on the following seventh day.

By a strange coincidence, another brahmin boy met Prabha's mother in a neighbour's house. He was a

scholar who knew all the Vedas. He also could predict the past and the future very correctly. Impressed by the intelligence of the boy, Prabha's mother promised him that he would be marrying Prabha on the following seventh day.

But neither Harichander, nor his wife or his son discussed this matter with each other.

On the particular day, all the three brahmin boys turned up at Harichander's house, dressed up as bridgrooms. Harichander, his wife and his son felt very foolish. How could one girl marry three men at the same time?. To add to the confusion, Prabha was found missing.

Harichander asked the scholarly brahmin, "Son! My daughter is missing. Can you tell us her whereabouts?". The scholar did

some calculations and told Harichander “Sir! A demon has abducted your daughter and has hidden her in a cave amidst a dense forest.”

Anxious about their daughter's fate, Prabha's parents were in tears. The scientist boy who was present there consoled the parents and left by his flying chariot to rescue the girl from the demon. The courageous brahmin also went with him. They spotted the cave where the girl was hidden. The courageous brahmin fought with the demon and rescued Prabha. The scientist brahmin, the girl and the courageous brahmin travelled back to Ujjain in the flying chariot. Harichander and his wife were relieved to have their daughter safely back.

At the auspicious moment of

marriage, the three brahmin boys started fighting with each other over Prabha.

The scholarly brahmin said in a proud voice, “I was the one who told all of you about Prabha’s whereabouts. Otherwise you would not have even known where to search for her. Therefore, I should marry her”.

The scientist scorned the scholar by saying, “You might have told us how to locate her. But without my flying chariot, none could reach the dense forest and that too, so quickly. She is definitely mine”.

The courageous brahmin too stated his claim to marry the girl. “Both of you were of immense help”, he agreed, “But I was the one who killed the demon. If I had not fought with him courageously, it would not

have been possible to rescue the girl. Prabha should be my wife”.

Harichander was totally confused. He could not decide anything.

Betal ending his story asked “O King Vikram! Tell me! Whom should Prabha marry? If you know the answer and still keep quiet, your head will burst into pieces”.

Without any alternative, Vikram replied, “Betal! Harichander’s daughter should wed the courageous brahmin”.

“Why?” asked Betal.

“It was the courageous brahmin who, without fear of dying at the hands of the demon, fought bravely. The scholar and the scientist were only being helpful. Prabha should therefore be married to the courageous brahmin”.

“Bravo! Bravo!” applauded Betal

and quickly went back to the tamarind tree.

## 5. WISE DECISION

Vikram did not lose patience with Betal's tricks. He walked back to the tree and carrying Betal on his shoulders, started walking again. Betal had yet another story to tell.

Kamalnath was the king of Ujjain. He was childless for a number of years. After severe penance, two children were born to him. The elder one was a daughter and the younger one, a son. Rajeshwari was the daughter. When she grew up, the king wanted to have her married to the best of bridegrooms. So he obtained various pictures of suitable princes so that Rajeshwari could chose a groom of her liking. She felt she could not decide on anyone of

them by merely looking at pictures. So she left the decision to her parents but told them that she wished to marry someone who was intelligent and brave.

The news that Rajeshwari wanted to marry an intelligent and brave man spread far and wide. Many suitors came to Ujjain to gain her hand in marriage. Out of these, one was a weaver. He claimed he could weave five fine clothes a day. "I donate one such cloth to the God; the second is given to a Brahmin and the other three will be used by me to run my family" he boasted.

Another suitor was a trader. He said that he could understand the language of all the beasts and birds.

The third suitor was a warrior. He was an ace swordsman and had successfully fought many battles.

The fourth one was a brahmin. He said he could make even the dead come alive with his knowledge.

All the four suitors were handsome and intelligent. Neither the king nor the princess could decide whom to select as the bridegroom.

Betal ended the story and asked the king “Vikram! I have a doubt. Only you are capable of answering the question. Whom should Rajeshwari marry? You know what will happen if you remain silent”.

Vikram could not remain silent. He had to answer Betal’s question.

“Dear Betal! You are forcing me to talk. And as soon as I open my mouth, you jump back to the tree. I am sure you know the answer to the question you just asked”.

Vikram continued to say “After all,



Rajeshwari, being the king's daughter belongs to the warrior clan. So it is very natural that she should marry someone from her own community. Moreover, she has specified that her husband should be a brave man. The weaver, the trader and the brahmin are not brave people, whereas the warrior has already proved his bravery by waging many wars."

"How can Rajeshwari be happy with a husband who can understand the language of the beasts; or with some one who can weave fine clothes? The brahmin seems to be a magician. Therefore the warrior is the right husband for Rajeshwari" explained Vikram.

Betal got another opportunity to escape from Vikram's grasp.

## 6. THE BRAINY BROTHER

Betal began narrating a new story. Vikram attentively listened to it.

In the land of Magadha lived a brahmin who performed all rituals very religiously. This pious brahmin had two sons. Both of them were highly intelligent and gifted with rare powers. One son could reveal the identity and the origin of a thing just by touching it or smelling it.

The second son was very good at judging women. Just one look at a woman and he could correctly say what her temperament was and what her likes and dislikes were.

The king of Magadha on hearing about these two talented brothers, appointed them in his service. Both of them were very happy to work for the king.

One day two persons fighting over

a precious pearl necklace came to the king to resolve the matter. One of them was quite fat. The king turned to the two talented brothers and asked the younger one, "Can you make out as to whom the pearl necklace really belongs to?". The younger brother sniffed at the hands of both the contenders and declared that the necklace belong to the fat person.

The fat person was overjoyed to hear this verdict "Salutations" he exclaimed, "this brahmin has rendered justice".

The other person also admitted that the necklace belonged to the fat man. He said that they had come to test the young brahmin's talent.

The king was pleased to hear this. He gave rewards to the talented brothers.

It so happened that the ruler of a neighbouring country was an enemy of the king of Magadh. Under the pretext of seeking his friendship, this ruler sent a messenger to the king, inviting him to visit their country.

The Magadha king was perplexed about his invitation. He wanted to know the truth. He therefore ordered the two brothers, "The ruler who has sent me an invitation to visit him has been our enemy for a long time. So, please go to his country and find out why he has sent this invitation."

The two brahmin brothers obeyed the king's orders. They went to the enemy country and after assessing the situation, returned to Magadh.

Reporting to the king, they said "Your Majesty! Your enemy seems to be good natured, But he is very

jealous of you. He may overthrow your kingdom or he may even kill you. Please be careful before accepting his friendship”.

The king decided to be watchful.

The next day, the king had an invitation to dinner from the enemy ruler. As a precaution, the king took both the brothers with him.

When the king and his retinue reached the enemy's palace, they were given a grand welcome. A feast had also been arranged for them.

After the heavy dinner, the king wished to sleep and relax for a while. Immediately, he was shown into a royal bedroom.

The king was about to climb on to the bed and lie down. At that moment, the elder brother stopped him, “Your Majesty! Please wait. I feel that there is an unusual strand

of hair in the pillow. It may hurt you”.

The pillow was thoroughly searched and indeed! There was actually a strand of hair amidst the



pillow cotton. It was very rough and seemed to be of some wild animal.

The younger brother smelt the hair and said, "This hair is poisonous. If it had pierced your neck, you would have died instantly".

When the king returned to his capital, he had the hair examined by the royal physician. The physician also declared that the hair had been smeared with some deadly poison.

Betal had come to the end of the story. But he had a question to ask Vikram. He wanted to know which of the two brothers was the wisest.

Betal warned Vikram "Don't keep silent. If you do, you know the consequence."

Vikram with a knowledgeable

smile on his face said "Betaal! All of us know that wisdom has no limits. Both the brothers were wise and talented. But amongst the two, the elder one was the wiser one".

"How can you say that?" asked Betaal.

"Well", replied Vikram, "He had the capability of indicating the presence of hair inside the pillow without even looking at it." The younger brother could identify the person only through smell. Hence the elder brother is the most intelligent of the two."

Betal agreed with Vikram. But he found another opportunity to slip out of Vikram's hands. Laughing demonically he shouted "Vikram! you have talked. Vikram! you have talked" and disappeared into the tamarind tree.



## **7. A DIFFICULT DECISION**

Vikram did not give up his efforts. He pulled down the corpse, placed it on the shoulders and walked towards the city.

Betal also continued its story telling:-

Dharamsheel, the king of Simhapuri was childless. He felt depressed without an heir to the throne. Hence he decided to worship Kali, the royal deity. He wanted to seek her blessings.

Goddess Kali was pleased at his intense devotion. She appeared in his dream and said "Dharamsheel, I am pleased with your sincere prayers. You will have a son who will be very powerful".

Next morning, the king consulted the royal astrologer about his dream. The astrologer did some

calculations and assured the king that his dream would come true.

Nine months passed. Dharam-sheel's wife gave birth to a baby boy. The king and the queen took the baby to the temple and after offering prayers, named the boy as Suryadev.

Suryadev grew up to be a fine young man. His best friend was Harisen, son of a washerman.

One day both the friends were walking on the banks of a river. There, amidst many washermen and washer women, Suryadev saw a beautiful young girl. He fell in love with her. At once, he went to the temple of Kali and prayed to the Goddess, "Mother! Grant me the wish to marry the girl I love and I shall offer my head at your altar on a fullmoon night".

Even after returning to the palace, Suryadev lost interest in all his surroundings. He could neither sleep nor eat. He could only think of the beautiful girl he saw at the river side. As a result, he fell ill. But he did not reveal to anybody the cause for his mental agony. Even the royal physicians were unable to diagnose his ailment.

Harisen was the only person the prince confided in. He told him about falling in love with a washerman's daughter.

Harisen was very eager to save his friend's life. He immediately went to the king and explained the situation to him. The king was desperate to see his only son, healthy and happy. Hence he agreed to this marriage even though he did not like the idea of a prince marrying a washer-girl.

Harisen approached the girl's

father and urged him to accept this match. But none knew that Harisen himself was in love with the same girl. He sacrificed love for the sake of friendship.

On an auspicious day, the prince Suryadev was married to Kanthimathi, daughter of the washerman.

Soon the fullmoon night occurred. Suryadev went to Kali's temple along with his wife and friend. He asked both of them to wait outside the temple and alone, entered the Sanctum Sanctorum\*. He stood before the Goddess and drawing the sword out, cut off his head as vowed by him.

After anxiously waiting for a long time for Suryadev to come out of the temple, Harisen instructed Kanthimathi to wait outside the temple

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\* inside of the temple.

itself and went inside in search of his friend. But he was shocked to find the body of his friend lying at one corner with the blood dripping head rolling nearby.

“After all, Suryadev was happily married to the girl he loved. Oh My Friend! Why did you take this extreme step?” cried Harisen.

He did not want to live without his friend. Moreover people might think that Harisen himself killed his best friend so that he could marry Kanthimathi.

With these thoughts running in his mind, Harisen also cut off his head with the sword and died instantly.

Mother Goddess was moved by Suryadev's devotion and sacrifice and also Harisen's loyalty towards the prince. She therefore brought

both of them back to life. But while doing so, by mistake she placed Harisen's head on Suryadev's body and Suryadev's head on Harisen's body.

Suryadev and Harisen were now alive but with their heads and bodies interchanged. Kanthimathi was unaware of the incident that took place in the temple.

The story ended here. But Betal had a doubt. Whom should Kanthimathi accept as her husband?

Vikram had the right answer to this question. He said in a firm tone "Kanthimathi should accept the body which has Suryadev's head on it as that of her husband".

He justified this reasoning and said, "It's because the entire body is controlled by the brain, that is, the head. A body is useless without the

head. So, undoubtedly the person who has Suryadev's head is Kanthimathi's husband".

As soon as he had the answer, Betal was back at the tamarind tree, hanging upside down. Vikram ran behind him.

## **8. THE STUPID SONS**

Vikram walked silently carrying Betal on his back. As usual, Betal started his narration.

Once upon a time a brahmin by name Mahabal lived in a city called Jayapur. He had four sons. All of them were useless. The eldest was a gambler, the second was corrupt, the third one was loafer and the fourth, an atheist\*. All of them were problematic children for Mahabal.

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\* One who did not believe in God.



Fed up with them, Mahabal decided to advise them to mend their ways. He told the eldest son, "Son! Gambling is an evil. It is not right on your part to waste hard earned money on gambling. Moreover the king has declared gambling an offence and has ordered that gamblers be banished from the state after chopping off



their ears and nose. So, please give up this bad habit”.

He turned to his second son and the third son and advised them “Loafers and corrupt people do not earn respect from anybody. Nobody likes them either. Please forsake these sinful practices. Be of good character and lead a worthy life!”.

Mahabal had a word of advice for his fourth son too. He called him and said “My dear son, earn knowledge, Otherwise you will repent in your old age”.

All the four children paid heed to their father’s advice and decided to lead a better life. They realised that lack of knowledge was a curse. So they decided to seek education and thereby earn their livelihood.

The next day itself they left for a bigger city, lived there for a couple of years, learnt the art of magic and

subsequently decided to return to their home town.

As a part of their journey, they had to pass through a forest. There they saw a person filling the bones and skin of a dead lion in two separate sacks. The four brothers purchased these two sacks from him because they wanted to experiment what they had learnt.

The eldest brother arranged all the bones so as to resemble the structure of a lion's body. The lion's skeleton was ready.

The second one used his magical powers to provide flesh over the skeleton. The creation looked strong and sturdy.

The third brother covered the flesh and the bones with skin. The lion looked real enough!

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